



## Wild and Scenic Rivers Program

### Program Links:

[Wild & Scenic Rivers: Charting the Course Report](#)

[National & Wild Scenic River System](#)



Alagnak River, Alaska. Photo courtesy of the NPS.

### Background

The National Park Service is responsible for 38 rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act flowing more than 2,800 miles throughout the United States. The Act requires the NPS to protect and enhance a designated river's free-flowing condition, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values. To meet these responsibilities, the National Leadership Council (NLC) approved the formation of a Servicewide Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) Program on May 17, 2007. The WSR Program is composed of a Steering Committee with interim leadership shared by the Associate Directorships for Partnership and Visitor Experience (PVE) and Natural Resource Stewardship and Science (NRSS) until funding is secured for permanent staff. The Director charged the Steering Committee with the development of an action plan, including recommending a permanent organizational location for the program lead and the development of a strategy for long-term funding in a program memo to Regional Directors (June 13, 2007). The need for coordinated, consistent action on WSR issues remains strong, particularly in light of recent Court decisions dismissing NPS arguments related to the Section 7 determination for the Stillwater Bridge at Saint Croix National Scenic River and user capacity provisions of the Comprehensive River Management Plan for the Merced River at Yosemite National Park.

### Highlights and Accomplishments

The Steering Committee has been working diligently over the last year and has formulated a recommendation to house the WSR Program in the Associate Directorate for PVE with joint oversight by the Associate Directorate of NRSS; prepared a 3-part funding strategy for bridge funding, permanent base funding of \$1.2 million, and task specific funding; submitted funding requests for fiscal years 2009 and 2010 (still unfunded); completed a program charter; completed and vetted an action plan for the

next 3 years; completed a draft directors order for wild and scenic rivers (DO46); participates on the newly established User Capacity Work Group; provided training to the Alaska Region; coordinated the NPS celebration of the 40th anniversary of the WSR Act (held at New River Gorge); established a network to enhance Servicewide communication, including a new Sharepoint site; provides Servicewide guidance on Section 7 evaluations and river management; and continues to participate on the Interagency WSR Coordinating Council.

### Status and Future

The Associate Directors for PVE and NRSS briefed Deputy Directors Wenk and Harvey on September 24, 2008. The briefing resulted in the approval of the WSR Program Charter. The Deputy Directors asked the Associate Directors to post the Steering Committee's action plan on the NLC Sharepoint site for review by the Regional Directors and to begin to identify bridge funding to hire a national program coordinator. They Associate and Regional Directors will have a conference call in November or December to review the action plan and make a final decision about the permanent organization home for the WSR program. The Steering Committee continues to have monthly phone calls and is planning to have their annual meeting in Sarasota, Florida the week of December 8-12, 2008.